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Copenhagen--a city for humans

By Willard Manus

COPENHAGEN — It was my first night in Copenhagen. I had gone into a small unpretentious restaurant for my first taste of Danish food and while waiting to be served fell into conversation with a Dane at the next table.

"Where are you from?" he asked. When I told him he cried, "Aha, an American!" And then, pulling his jacket collar over his face like a cartoon-strip spy, he cocked an accusing finger at me and shouted, "C.I.A!"

America is very much on the minds of the Danes these days. Reaction against the war in Vietnam

is strong; so much so that the very word American seems to trigger off an automatic chain of responses, as it did in the restaurant that night: war, power struggles, bombs, spies, C.I.A.

What also contributes to this hyper-sensitivity to Americans, I think, is the slow process of Americanization in Denmark. Everywhere in Copenhagen I saw American-style bars replacing the "hyggelige" (cozy) Danish pubs. On many corners, the old Kobmandsbutik (corner grocery) has given way to the supermarket.

But I'd be painting a totally slanted picture of Copenhagen if I said that it reminded me of an Ameri-

can city. The "Americanization" is really only skin-deep. Underneath, Copenhagen is still part of the old Denmark.

Copenhagen is still the town of copper spires turned green by salt air from the sea. It is still where King and Parliament reside in magnificent palaces, where the Royal Guard march, where the Royal Ballet dance and the privileged few live in spacious beautiful homes.

It is also where the descendant of the true Copenhageners can still be seen. He is more nondescript than in the days of H. C. Andersen, but he still haunts old cafes, feels lost if his visits are cut off even for a day.

Copenhagen is also a town of the antique dealer who compete in numbers only with bookdealers and florists. Statistics show that there are more people selling antiques, books and flowers in Copenhagen than in most other cities. Presumably there would also be more people buying these things, which should signify a predilection for tradition, culture and beauty. The old town itself could be taken as testimony of that. But its greatest charm may be that here, within a rather small area, is everything that makes a town. One may spend weeks in other of the world's great cities, yet still leave them with a frustrated feeling of having

organized opulence and sensuality portrayed for the "Black Orpheus." They wander down south in Basse, where people start the festivities by adding rings for the dura-

which was 70 to 90 percent Allied bombing during the

Copenhagen has always had the reputation of being an expensive city. Even beer, which is always drunk with smorrebrod and which is made practically around the corner in Copenhagen's Carlsberg and Tuborg breweries, costs anywhere from 45 to 75 cents a bottle, depending on where you buy it. Blame Denmark's crushingly high taxes for this. And yet, the Danes have achieved so high a standard of living that, man and woman alike, they go on quaffing the brew to their heart's content. There are only 4½ million people in Denmark, but they drink between three and four million bottles of beer a day!

But the important thing about Denmark is that even if it costs a bit, you get solid value for your dollar. Anything you buy in Denmark, be it furniture or silver or food, is going to be the best for the price.